

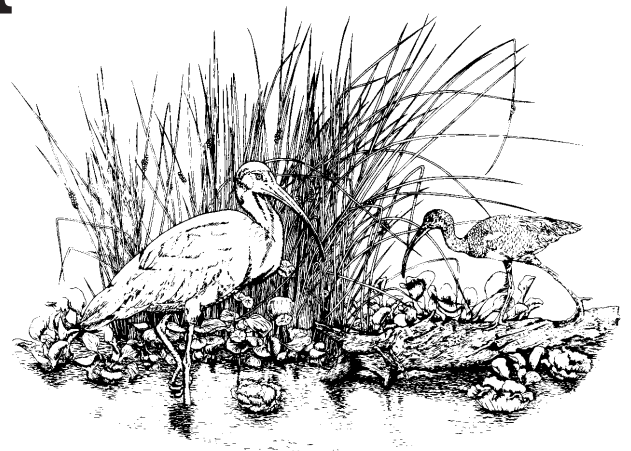
Kissimmee River Restoration

■ Historically the Kissimmee River meandered approximately 103 miles from Lake Kissimmee to Lake Okeechobee through a 1-2 mile wide floodplain. The river and its flanking floodplain consisted of a mosaic of wetland plant communities and supported a diverse group of waterfowl, wading birds, fish, and other wildlife. the historic Kissimmee River was hydrologically unique among North American river systems in that it had prolonged periods of extended floodplain inundation.

■ The river was channelized between 1962 and 1971. Two-thirds of the historical floodplain was drained. One-third of the river channel was destroyed by excavation of the canal and placement of the spoil material. Implementation of the Kissimmee Flood Control project led to drastic declines in wintering waterfowl, wading bird and game fish populations, as well as loss of ecosystem functions.

■ The Kissimmee River restoration project will restore the ecological integrity of the damaged ecosystem by:

- *reestablishing historic hydrologic conditions*
- *recreating the historical river/floodplain connectivity*
- *recreating the historic mosaic of wetland plant communities*
- *restoring the historic biological diversity and functionality*



■ The Kissimmee River restoration project was authorized by the U.S. Congress in the Water Resources Development Act of 1992. The major components of the project include:

- *reestablishment of inflows from Lake Kissimmee that will be similar to historical discharge characteristics*
- *acquisition of approximately 85,000 acres of land in the lower Kissimmee Chain of Lakes and river valley*
- *continuous backfilling of 22 miles of canal*
- *removal of 2 water control structures*
- *recarving of 9 miles of former river channel*

■ The restoration project will restore an estimated 40 square miles of river/floodplain ecosystem including 26,500 acres of wetlands, 43 continuous miles of meandering river and will provide habitat for over 300 species, including the endangered bald eagle, snail kite, and wood stork.

■ The total project cost in 1997 dollars is estimated at \$415 million. This cost will be equally shared by the State of Florida and the Federal government. Most of the state's fiscal responsibility will occur as land acquisition, through funds provided by the Save Our rivers and Preservation 2000 programs. The federal portion of the project cost will be provided through annual budgetary appropriations. The federal funding request for FY 2000 is estimated at \$33 million.

■ Construction will be phased over 15 years. The first phase of construction will began in the headwater lakes in 1997. The construction in the headwaters includes the modification of the outlet structure at S-65 and the widening of canals linking the lakes, which will allow reestablishment of historical inflows to the river while maintaining flood protection. The remaining phases involve backfilling of the canal (dechannelization of the river) in the river valley and will begin with the first backfilling contract award March 30, 1999. This first phase should be completed in 18 to 24 months and includes approximately 9 miles of canal backfilling and removal of the S-65B structure. The next backfilling contract is scheduled to be awarded March 2001 and the overall construction is anticipated to be completed by 2010.

■ A major component of the restoration project is the ecological evaluation program, which has been designed to evaluate the success of the project in restoring ecosystem integrity and to provide for scientifically informed fine tuning and adaptive management of the recovering and restored system. Multiple targets of success have been established and will be continuously tracked during and after the project construction.

